THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) It has been decided by the Government to fix the fare for Haj pilgrims at Rs. 12,000. For the balance amount, subsidy will be provided. The matter of reduction in subsidy is to be examined by the Ministry of Civil Aviation separately.

**Inflation rate**

525. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Inflation rate touched an almost two decade low during the recent week; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The annual point to point inflation rate (based on Wholesale Price Index) in the first six months of 2001-02 (April-September) remained close to 5 per cent level. It started declining after September to reach a low 1.13 per cent in the week ending February 9, 2002 which was the lowest since January 27, 1979, when the inflation rate had touched a low level of 1 per cent. There was virtually no price rise in the manufactured sector which registered just about 0.2 per cent annual price rise by February, 2002, though in the primary product group, which includes agriculture commodities, the price rise was 3.17 per cent. The effect of the rise in prices of the fuel group experienced last year, due to an increase in administered prices of fuel products, evened out during 2001-02 and the annual inflation in the fuel group stood at 1.6 per cent in February, 2002.

**UTIs holdings in five companies**

526. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Unit Trust of India has sought Government's approval to divest holdings in five companies;

(b) if so, the details of these companies;

(c) whether their proposal has been approved; and

(d) if so, by when final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) The Unit Trust of India (UTI) is not required to seek Government approval for its investment/divestment decisions. Such decisions are made on the basis of UTI's own commercial judgement.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

**Co-operative banks in rural areas**

527. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of banks/cooperative banks functioning in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, Uttranchal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh along with the details of the total deposit and working capital of each bank; district-wise;

(b) the details of farmers, artisans and unemployed educated youth benefited by the aforesaid bank during the last three years; and

(c) the details of loans disbursed by the banks/cooperative banks in these State to the needy persons such as artisans, farmers and unemployed educated youths during this period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) District wise details of number of branch offices and deposits of scheduled commercial banks in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, Uttranchal, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh as on last Friday of September 2001 as available from Reserve Bank of India are given Annexure. [*See* Appendix 195 Annexure No. 5] District-wise details of deposits and working capital of District Central Cooperative Banks for the above States as on 31st March 2000 are given in *Annexure-[Seé* Appendix 195 Annexure No. 6]

(b) and (c) The details of credit sanctioned and disbursed by scheduled commercial banks under Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana as well as the total loan sanctioned in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh during the last three years are given, in *Annexure*-[*See* Appendix 195 Annexure No. 7 and 8]. Information separately for Uttranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are not available.